

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

PUBLIC NOTICE

Released: November 3, 1994

MODIFIED CABLE CONVERTER-DECODERS

It has come to the attention of the Commission that the use of unauthorized cable television converter-decoders to view cable programming has been growing. We are issuing this public notice in an effort to inform the public that the use of unauthorized converter-decoders in this fashion violates Federal law.

All models of converter-decoders must be authorized by the Commission. The Commission does not knowingly grant authorizations for converter-decoders which are capable of intercepting encoded or scrambled cable programming transmissions without authority from the cable operator transmitting such programming. Any modifications made to this equipment to allow such illegal use will void any existing FCC authorization. Thus, devices which were initially authorized by the FCC but are sold with modifications allowing the user of the device to receive encoded or scrambled cable television programming without authorization from the cable operator are illegal regardless whether the FCC authorization label is still affixed to them. Converter-decoders modified in this manner may not lawfully be imported, sold, leased or used. *See* 47 USC Sec. 302(b).

The use of a converter-decoder to intercept or receive, or to assist in intercepting or receiving, cable programs without authorization from a cable system carries penalties of up to \$1000 or imprisonment for up to six months. In addition, any person who employs such devices for commercial or private financial gain may be subject to a fine of \$50,000 or two years imprisonment for a first offense. Greater penalties apply to subsequent offenses. *See* 47 USC Sec. 553.

Consumers should be on notice that devices that are advertised with the promise to deliver "free satellite TV" or "free cable TV" may be illegal and the use of such devices without authorization from the cable operator may subject the user to the aforementioned penalties.

For additional information on this matter, please contact John A. Reed at (202) 653-7313 or at FCC, 1300B4, Washington, DC 20554.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION